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STATE FOR AF/W, AF/S, AND AF/RSA
PARIS FOR POL) D,ELIA

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SUBJECT: SENEGALESE PRESIDENT PLANS TO VISIT ZIMBABWE

REF: DAKAR 1988

Classified By: CHARGE D, AFFAIRES JAY SMITH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade is still planning to visit Zimbabwe and meet with President Robert Mugabe in an effort to succeed where South African President Thabo Mbeki has failed: relieving the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe. To do so, according to President Wade, several African presidents acting through the African Union need to mediate between President Mugabe and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On October 18, MFA Director of International Organizations Mame Baba Cisse informed Pol Counselor that President Wade is still planning to travel to Harare to discuss Zimbabwe's political crisis with President Mugabe. President Wade originally announced his intention to travel to Zimbabwe during a press conference shortly after returning from the United States for the meeting of the UN General Assembly (REFTEL). According to Cisse, the Government of Zimbabwe welcomes President Wade's visit, but since there was not enough time to prepare for it before the end of October the presidential rendezvous will take place at the end of November.

¶3. (C) Cisse reiterated what President Wade said during his press conference; it is not possible for one country (i.e. South Africa) or one president (i.e. South African President Thabo Mbeki) to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe. He echoed Wade's sentiment, arguing that the President Mbeki's efforts heretofore had met with only failure. Instead of relying on one head of state, several African presidents need to work together through the African Union to relieve the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe, he opined.

¶4. (C) When asked, Cisse said that President Wade did not have any particular country or president in mind, saying that all efforts to improve the situation would be welcome. Like Wade, he criticized the United Kingdom for its handling of the crisis, particularly Gordon Brown's threat to boycott the EU-AU Summit if President Mugabe participates. (Note: During his press conference, President Wade said that former Prime Minister Tony Blair's failure to live up to the Lancaster House commitments to subsidize land reform were the origin of the crisis. End note.)

¶5. (C) On October 19, UK DCM Julia Edwards told Pol Counselor that the United Kingdom welcomed efforts by other African heads of state to assist in resolving the crisis,

although HMG took exception to the notion that the origin stems from the UK,s failure to honor its commitments saying, &We signed on for land reform, not Mugabe giving land to his mates.⁸ Moreover, she said the UK would not allow President Wade to negotiate between it and President Mugabe, as Wade had suggested in the press conference. Instead, efforts should be focused on getting Mugabe to stop repressing the opposition.

¶6. (C) Comment: Upon his return from the United States, President Wade focused the majority of his comments during his press conference on foreign affairs. Facing criticism for alleged corruption and cronyism in his government, he like many second-term presidents, is putting more energy into foreign policy. Moreover, it is clear that Wade is at least in part motivated by a desire to compete with and outdo Mbeki, with whom he has clashed over the direction of the AU and NEPAD. It is also equally clear that Wade and his team in the MFA have only the most basic understanding of the crisis in Zimbabwe and are ill-equipped to make any dramatic progress during Wade,s upcoming visit. In the meeting with Pol Counselor, Cisse noted that Senegal does not have an embassy in Harare and requested any information or analysis of the current state-of-play in Zimbabwe that the United States might be able to provide. End comment.
SMITH